

Need Help with Medical Bills? You May Qualify for Medicaid's Medically Needy Program.

The Medically Needy Program provides assistance with medical expenses to people who do not qualify for full Medicaid benefits. The program mostly helps pregnant women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. To qualify, you must belong to one of the program's coverage groups. In addition, you must have limited resources. The program helps people who have too much money to qualify for other medical assistance, but who have high medical bills. Those bills may allow an individual to "spenddown" to the program's income limits.

Coverage Groups. To qualify, you must fall into one of these groups:

- (1) children under age 21; (2) relatives caring for a dependent child;
- (3) pregnant women; (4) women who recently had a child; and (5) the elderly, blind, or disabled.

Resources. A single person or household may qualify with resources up to \$10,000. Resources are things that you own, such as cash, bank accounts, stocks, bonds, personal property, and real estate other than your home.

Income. Specific income rules vary by coverage group. The income of the household is counted. This includes earned income (such as wages) and unearned income (such as Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, and other government payments). Income limits vary by household size. The current income limit for a family of one or two is \$483. Income over this amount may be "spent down" by deducting medical expenses. Income and expenses are counted over a two-month period.

Expenses Covered. In general, the Medically Needy program covers the costs and services that Medicaid pays for. These include visits to doctors, dentists, and optometrists, prescription drugs, ambulance services, medical equipment and supplies, and independent laboratory testing. (This is not a complete list.) Some medical expenses are not covered at all. Some may require a co-payment.

How to Apply. Contact your local Department of Human Services (DHS) office. When you apply, DHS will ask you for a medical expense verification form. The form must be filled in by people you owe or recently paid for medical services. This includes doctors, hospitals, and other health care providers.

What to do if You are Denied Coverage. If you are denied Medically Needy coverage, you can appeal by writing DHS to ask for a hearing.

For additional information on the Medically Needy program, please contact the Legal Hotline for Older Iowans at 1-800-992-8161. The Legal Hotline for Older Iowans is a project of Iowa Legal Aid that is partially funded by the U.S. Administration on Aging. The Hotline is a free, confidential service for all Iowans 60 and older with questions on non-criminal legal matters.